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Report Says Mafia Tried to Use CIA

Mafia godfathers wanted to knock off Cuban President Fidel Castro in the 1960s before the Central Intelligence Agency recruited them to do the job. They accepted the CIA's contract to kill Castro in order to compromise the federal government.

These are some of the startling conclusions that the House Assassinations Committee will present in its final report. The report hasn't yet been released to the public, but we can report it will air the CIA-Mafia plot against Castro thoroughly.

The report will raise the possibility that the plot to assassinate Castro might somehow have backfired against the late President Kennedy, although the committee will largely exonerate Castro from involvement in the Kennedy killing.

"Organized crime was active in attempts to assassinate Castro independent of any activity it engaged in with the CIA," declares the unreleased report.

Quoting a top-secret 1977 CIA report, the committee notes that "it was possible that the CIA simply found itself involved in providing additional resources for independent operations that the syndicate already had underway . . . In a sense, the CIA may have been piggy-backing on the syndicate."

Adds the committee report: "Organized crime decided to assist the CIA for two reasons: CIA sponsorship would mean official sanctioning and logistical support; and a relationship with the CIA in the assassination of a foreign leader could be used by organized

crime as leverage to prevent prosecution for unrelated offenses."

In other words, the mob intended to use the CIA as a tool to force the federal government into easing its pressure on the underworld.

The committee criticized the CIA for concealing its anti-Castro activity from the Warren Commission. The plot against Castro, states the report, "should have been aggressively explored" by the Warren Commission.

By way of background, the CIA had two operations going against Castro in the 1960s. One involved a high official of Castro's government, named Rolando Cubella but known to the CIA as AMLASH. He persuaded the CIA that he was willing to organize a coup against the Cuban dictator. The CIA was in contact with AMLASH from March 1961 until June 1965.

The other plot, initiated in 1960 a few months after Castro ousted Fulgencio Batista, involved CIA recruitment of U.S. mobsters to kill Castro. This plan was officially scrapped in February, 1963, nine months before Kennedy was assassinated.

Several years ago the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that Castro would not have blamed Kennedy for the CIA-Mafia plots against him. "Castro probably would not have been certain that the CIA was behind the underworld attempts," the Senate panel decided.

Nor would Castro have distinguished between CIA-encouraged plots and wildcat operations by Cuban exiles "which were not affiliated in any

way with the CIA," the Senate report said.

The House committee is not so sure, however. It was "unable to confirm the findings of the Senate committee that there were reasons to discount the dangers to President Kennedy and that may have resulted from CIA associations with the Mafia in anti-Castro activities."

Indeed, the House committee report concludes, if Castro erred in his assumptions about the Kennedy administration's involvement, "it was in the direction of attributing more, not less, U.S. government control over attempts to depose him . . ."

A still-secret CIA report supports this position. But the CIA report agrees with the Senate committee that the Mafia plots ended months before the Dallas shooting and therefore would have had minimal influence on Castro.

Here again, the House committee is not so sure. "The record is clear that the relationships created by these plots did not terminate in February, 1963, nor had the threat to Castro or President Kennedy abated by that time," states the report, made available to our associate Tony Capaccio. "There is insufficient evidence to conclude that the inherently sinister relationship became benign before Nov. 22, 1963."

As to the origins of the CIA-Mafia alliance to kill Castro, the House report notes that both parties had motives for eliminating the Cuban dictator. The CIA's were political; the mob's were financial.